any locality in India. The only record is that of the holotype as mentioned in the Fauna.

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36. OCCURRENCE OF SPIDERS *TRIAERIS MANII* AND *TRIAERIS POONAENSIS*, FAMILY OONOPIDAE, IN A BANANA AGROECOSYSTEM IN VADODARA, GUJARAT

(With one plate)

During a recent survey in banana fields in and around Vadodara City, Gujarat, to study the spider diversity of the banana agroecosystem, we came across two rare species of Family Oonopidae. Review of literature showed that these two spiders, *Triaeris manii* and

Siliwal, Manju and Dolly Kumar: *Triaeris* sp. PLATE 1

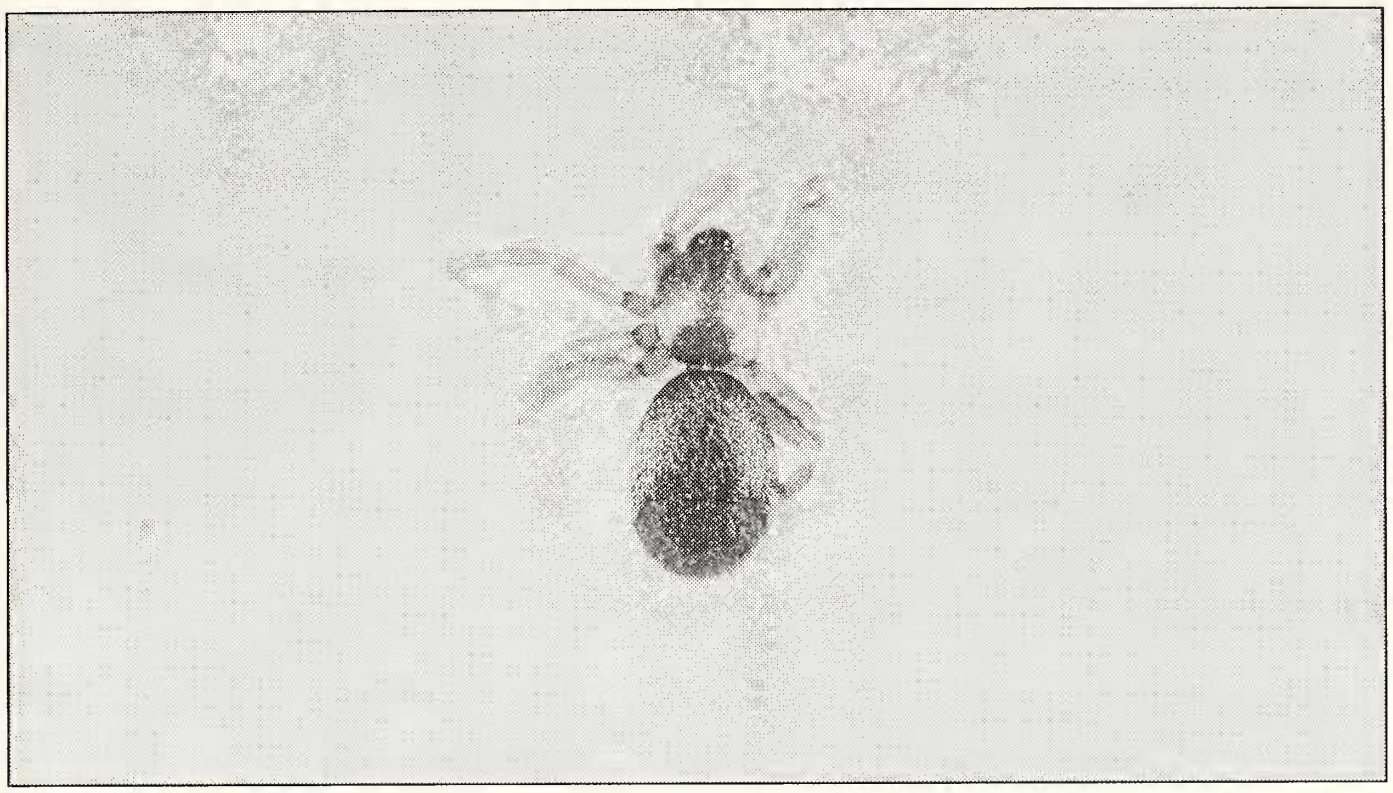

Fig. 1: *Triaeris manii* Tikader & Malhotra (16x)

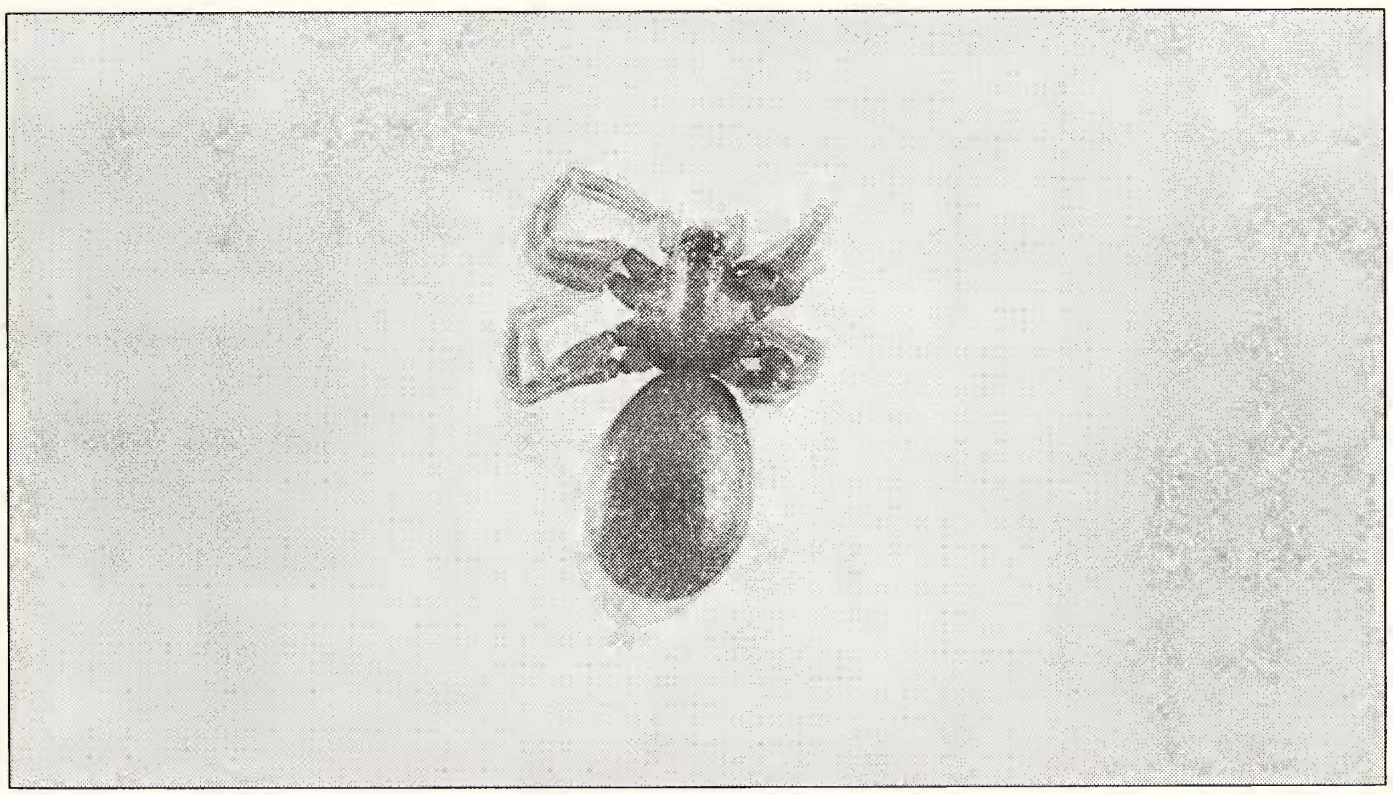

Fig. 2: *Triaeris poonaensis* Tikader & Malhotra (12x)

T. poonaensis were reported only once from the Indian subcontinent by Tikader and Malhotra (1974) from Poona, Maharashtra. This family is little known in India (Tikader and Malhotra 1974), hence it is a significant observation. These spiders mimic the beetles of Family Tenebrionidae. Their cephalothorax, legs and abdomen are reddish-brown. In the present study, these spiders were found inhabiting moist places like decaying leaves of the banana plant, while Tikader and Malhotra (op. cit.) found them under stones and dead bark of trees. Clearly, they prefer moist, dark, damp places, especially in decaying organic matter like dead leaves or the bark of a tree.

Triaeris manii Tikader & Malhotra
(Plate 1, Fig. 1)

Cephalothorax, legs and abdomen reddish-brown. Abdomen nearly elliptical, clothed with fine hairs, scutum on dorsal side complete, on the ventral side incomplete, resembling the elytra of coleopterans. It measures about 2.4 mm in total length, Carapace 1.0 mm in length and 0.7 mm in width, whereas abdomen 1.4 mm in length and 1.2 mm in width. Males, females and juveniles were sighted in the field. They seem to be uncommon in the banana fields. Higher numbers were sighted in January.

Triaeris poonaensis Tikader & Malhotra
(Plate 2, Fig. 2)

Like *T. manii*, these spiders are red, abdomen nearly elliptical, clothed with fine hairs, Dorsal side (except a little posterior part) with conspicuous scutum. Tikader and Malhotra (1974) reported males with complete scutum, unlike females. Ventral side also with scutum extending to base of spinnerets. Scarce in banana fields, only females and juveniles were sighted. Total length *c.* 2.8 mm, Carapace 1.0 mm in length and 0.8 mm in width, abdomen 1.9 mm in length and 1.2 mm in width. Higher numbers were sighted in January, as in *T. manii*.

The occurrence of uncommon spider species in a banana field indicates that the banana agroecosystem provides suitable conditions for breeding of spiders. Detailed studies of spider biology and ecology could be conducted in this agroecosystem.

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37. VARIATIONS IN THE WEB OF TWO RELATED SPECIES OF SPIDERS *GASTERACANTHA UNGUIFERA* SIMON AND *GASTERACANTHA HASSELTII* C.L. KOCH

(*With two text-figures*)

Silk plays an important role in the life of spiders. At all life stages, spiders have the ability to release silk (Hansell 1984), which is used not only to spin prey capture webs but also to make